

# MAORI DOG-SHAPE BOWLS

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*Abstract.* Two groups of dog-shape bowls are described; an older group made with stone tools and a newer group made with metal tools.

In 1922, Dr. H. D. Skinner identified a type of wooden bowl "which represents a four-legged animal of indeterminate species. The animal can hardly be other than the dog, which the Maoris brought with them to New Zealand, or the pig, which is traditionally remembered." (Skinner 1922:182). Traditional stories of dogs are not uncommon, however the association of a specific named dog with dog bowls for serving food is indicated by the following.

In 1890, Auckland Museum received a dog bowl in the collection of Gilbert Mair. This was given the name of Potakatawhiti by Mair and was said to be "used for serving up preserved birds to visitors at a feast. Carved by Wero c. 1865 it represents Ouenuku and Whakaturia and their dog Potakatawhiti." (Ethnology Dept. catalogue entry No.48, Auckland Museum). This item was exchanged to Otago Museum in 1940 (Otago Museum D40.318, width 45 cm, depth 46 cm. It is now used as a collection box). It is actually a dog carrying a lidded bowl on its back, not a dog-shape bowl.

The association of Potakatawhiti with dog bowls is interesting. Potakatawhiti was the dog of Houmaitawhiti, father of Tama Te Kapua of the Arawa. The dog was eaten by Uenuku and Toi Te Huatahi because it had eaten tapu material belonging to Uenuku. When Whakaturia's people came looking for the dog it howled from inside Toi's great belly. A war ensued which led to the emigration of Tama Te Kapua and the Arawa canoe from Hawaiki (Grey 1928:54). This version of the story was written in 1853 by Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikaheke of Ngati Rangiwewehi (see Simmons 1973:62). A similar version is given by Eruera Te Uremutu of Ngati Whakaue in 1846 (Simmons 1976:70). The name was also given by Uenukukopako to his dog which was killed on Mokoia Island (Grey 1928:89). Uenukukapako lived about six generations after Tama Te Kapua (Simmons 1976:276, 284-5).

It is appropriate, in the Bay of Plenty – Arawa territory, that such bowls be used to serve food to the paramount chiefs, though the custom is not restricted to that area. A very simple bowl in Auckland Museum from the Waikato region has a head and tail on a globular body. Up to the 17th century Arawa influence was quite important in the heart of Tainui territory (Robertson 1958:51). Such bowls were the personal food bowls of named *ariki* (paramount chiefs) such as Hinematiouro of Ngati Porou. Only another *ariki* of equivalent rank could eat from the same bowl. Unknown


sons raised in a different place often make themselves known in stories by taking some of their father's food, or by other actions which to a person of lesser mana would have involved serious harm.

*The bowls*

The dog-shape bowls can be divided up into two series, those made with stone or soft metal tools and those made with steel tools. We shall consider firstly five dog-shape bowls made with stone or soft metal tools. These are listed as nos. 1-5.

1. (Figs. 1,2) Auckland Institute and Museum 22968. Length 51 cm, height 28 cm, width 37 cm. Deposit H. E. Blundell.

The simplest form is this bowl from Waikaretu, south of Port Waikato made with stone tools. It has a fairly rudimentary spout, a head and a big tail. The head is of manaia form rather than of a dog but would still have been used in the same way as the dog-shape bowls of more realistic form. Stevenson says "viewed from the side, this bowl resembles a grotesquely fat animal with a small head and short tail" (Stevenson 1939:206; Simmons 1973:62).



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Fig. 1. The Waikaretu bowl. Auckland Institute and Museum 22968.

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Fig. 2. The Waikaretu bowl. Auckland Institute and Museum 22968.


2. (Fig. 3). Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard, 53496. Length 66 cm, depth outside 22 cm. Ex Boston Museum 1899. This bowl is part of the Boston Museum collection which may have been acquired before 1825.

The bowl had been made with stone or possibly soft metal tools. The head is realistic with teeth and serrated paua shell for the eyes. Decoration consists of planed spirals of East Coast form on the shoulders and Arawa style *pakati* and *haehae* on the body. The penis is slightly raised.

Fig. 3. Bowl. Peabody Museum, Harvard, 53496.

3. (Figs. 4,5) Auckland Institute and Museum 47188. Length 62 cm, width 28.6 cm, depth 19.7 cm. Purchased Edward Earle Vaile Fund. Found at Otangiwainuku near Te Puke, Bay of Plenty.

The bowl, made with stone tools, is both human and dog-shaped. It has a human head, hands and feet but a dog penis. The head has a grooved spout on top and the tail is a round knob. The bowl has cracked and been repaired on one side with flax fibre. At some later date after its manufacture two holes have been pierced in either side to lash on a lid. Decoration on the arms and legs is by *taratara a kae* while the head carries a Gisborne style *unaunahi*. Traditional information would suggest the carver was named Nga Korongaengana who was of Ngati Porou descent.



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Figs. 4,5. The Te Puke bowl. Auckland Institute and Museum 47188. 4. Side. 5. Base.



4. (Fig. 6). Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, D.D.R., 22874. Length 50 cm, width 30 cm, depth 18 cm. Purchased from W. H. Oldman in 1908. This is probably the bowl mentioned by Skinner as being sold to Dresden “some years ago” (Skinner 1922:183).

The bowl has a manaia type head, short body and slanted back legs. The shoulders are decorated with *whakaironui* pattern spirals (*pakati* and *haehae*) of East Coast form while the body is decorated with *pakati* in leaf-shape *haehae* lines. The carving has been done with stone tools by an East Coast carver.



Fig. 6. The Dresden – Oldman bowl. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, 22874. Sketched in Dresden by D.R.S.

5. (Fig. 7). Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, D.D.R., 12164. Length 95 cm, width 52 cm height 26 cm. Purchased from Umlauff in Hamburg in 1899.

The bowl, made with stone tools, has a realistic head with tongue. The tail has a pouring spout groove but this groove does not penetrate the bowl. The shoulders and belly of the bowl are decorated with finely carved *whakaironui* spirals. On style and tradition this bowl is probably East Coast in manufacture.

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Fig. 7. Hinematioro's bowl in Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, 12164.  
(Photo of cast now in Auckland Museum).

By courtesy of the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, a cast has now been placed in Auckland Museum. Knowledgeable elders have been able to recognise the bowl as that which formerly belonged to Hinematiro of Ngati Porou. The bowl is clearly marked with female sex. The carver is traditionally known as Te Rakau Hapawai, also of Ngati Porou (pers. comm. Te Riria),

This last bowl (No. 5) is the most important one of the early group not only because of its traditional importance but also for its use as a model from which a particular group of carvers were able to carve further bowls. In particular the Ngati Tarawai group at Ruato, Lake Rotoitoi, comprising Te Amo a Tai, Wero Taroi, Anaha Te Rahui and Tene Waitere. About 1865 the dog bowl formerly in the Mair collection in Auckland Museum (Otago Museum D40.318) had been carved by Wero Taroi. This was a dog carrying a lidded bowl. There is another bowl of this type in Dresden (13818). It consists of a dog figure carrying a round lidded bowl on its back (overall length 28 cm, depth 17 cm, height 25 cm). I made a note that it was the work of "Anaha Te Rahui" but it was not possible to photograph the piece. A similar lidded bowl on the back of a dog is to be found in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (No. 80.0.4111). Again I have suggested in my notes that the carver was "Anaha Te Rahui". This bowl which was purchased in New York was on display in a sealed case and could not be handled or measured (Simmons 1982:263). These lidded bowls on dogs' backs are probably early attempts at the dog shape which was known traditionally but for which there were, at that stage, no viewable examples in New Zealand. The museum catalogue in Dresden records that photographs of bowl 5 (12164) were sent to the Arawa carvers at Ruato about 1900. The photos from Dresden gave the necessary model so that the form could be copied. Once photographs were available for models, bowls again began to be produced, replacing the dog with lidded bowl form. However, the carving was now with modern steel tools. The dog-shape bowls thus produced are listed in nos. 6-9.

6. (Fig. 8). Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, D.D.R., 13726. Length 84 cm, width 41.3 cm, depth 24 cm. Purchased from H. Robley 1902.

This bowl, carved in the style of Wero Taroi with steel tools has a more manaia-like head but otherwise follows No. 5 (12164) fairly closely except that some Arawa style decoration has been added. Despite the closeness of the date this bowl would appear to be a copy of Fig. 7.

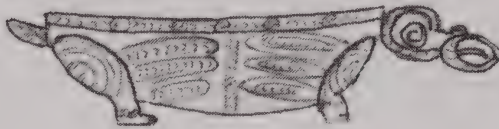


Fig. 8. The Dresden — Robley bowl by Wero. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden, 13726. (Sketched in Dresden by D.R.S.).

7. (Fig. 9). Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, U.K., Z 63444. Length 104.5 cm, width 53 cm, depth 29 cm. Received in 1905 and was purchased in London by Sir Julius Werhner.

This bowl “was probably carved by a Ngati Pikiāo carver at Ruato” (Neich 1977:164). The head is manaia-like with closed mouth and the ears are placed on top. The body is decorated with a large *whakaironui* spiral on each side of the stomach and similar spirals on the shoulders but the bowl has a clearly marked rim. The tail is grooved and a hole is provided in the wall so the groove could act as a spout. The bowl has female sex. It was illustrated also by Barrow in 1974 (Barrow 1974:127).

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Fig. 9. The Cambridge bowl, Z 63444.

8. (Fig. 10). Otago Museum, Dunedin. D57.549. Length 73.5 cm, width 33.5 cm, depth 19.5 cm. Obtained per K. Webster from the collections of Bankfield Museum, Halifax, on the dispersal of that museum’s collection.

Fig. 10. The Bankfield bowl. Otago Museum D57.549.



The bowl is similar to the last with manaia-type head, large *whakaironui* spirals on sides of stomach and shoulders and ears set back on the head. The feet detail is more simply executed but a similar band of carving is made around the rim. It has no sex and is made with steel tools, probably by Wero (Neich 1977:164).

9. (Fig. 11). Auckland Institute and Museum 50595A, length 50 cm, width 30 cm, depth 18 cm. Obtained by exchange from the Australian Museum, Sydney.

The stance of this bowl with lower back legs is similar to No. 4 (22874) in Dresden but the decoration is much closer to No. 5 (12164) also in Dresden. The carving is made with steel tools and Roger Neich considers it the work of Te Amo a Tai (pers. comm.). At some time the bowl has been provided with a copper rim to hold it together after cracking.

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Fig. 11. The Sydney bowl. Auckland Institute and Museum 50595A.

Feast bowl. Location unknown but length 104 cm (Beasley 1919:70).

In 1922 H. D. Skinner considered a bowl then in the possession of H. G. Beasley to be a hybrid between a dog bowl and a feather box (Skinner 1922:183). It is a feast bowl (Beasley 1919:70) with a female figure at one end and a body with a tail above a figure at the other.

### *Discussion*

The name of Potakatawhiti is associated with dog bowls which were used to serve the personal food of the *ariki taiopuru* or *ariki tapairu*, the paramount chief or chieftainness of a region. Hinematiaro of Ngati Porou was such a woman who had all the rights and privileges of a man. Her food was served in the large bowl (here listed as No.5) which was certainly made in the 18th century. The Waikato bowl (No.1), though of different shape, is undoubtedly a dog bowl used for serving food to a per-



son of very high rank who lived in the 18th century or earlier. The bowl from the Peabody Museum (No.2) is old and has been made with stone or possibly soft metal tools. The realistic head shape can be allied with No.5 in Dresden. The Te Puke bowl (No.3) is a dog/man. The subsequent adventures of Toi Te Huatahi recount that in one version he was turned into a dog. His wife when visiting relatives had to confess that the cur following her was Toi. This story would seem to be the origin of the man/dog form. The bowl is made with stone tools and was already old when it was placed in the cave where it was found.

The other dog bowls are all the work of carvers whose work can be identified and who were working in the tradition of steel tools. All were from Ngati Tarawhai or Ngati Pikiao at Ruato where photographs were sent of Hinematiaro's bowl (No.5). Dog bowls or other items often show the sex of the person for whom they are made. Hinematiaro's bowl is female, the Te Puke bowl is male, the Harvard bowl is male, the Cambridge bowl is female and the Dunedin and Auckland bowls are sexless.

Dog bowls are rare and important status symbols. The stone tooled examples were made for named individuals of *ariki taiopuru* and *ariki tapairu* rank. The steel tooled examples made by the Ruato carvers of Ngati Tarawhai would appear to be copies of the Hinematiaro bowl (No.5). Judging by the Sydney-Auckland bowl (No.9), photographs of the second Dresden bowl (No.4) may also have been available. The Ngati Tarawhai bowls are finely made but were not made for named individuals as the other bowls certainly were. The speed with which the copies reached Europe is surprising but not unusual given the relationship between the Ruato carvers, Charles Nelson and the market overseas (Neich 1983:255, 259). In 1905 Nelson sold the complete house Rauru to Hamburg Museum. It will be noted that the dog bowl copies reached Europe about the same time.

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